

DATE 3/11/11
HB 161

Support of HB 161: Repeal of Medical Marijuana

I am an obstetrician/gynecologist in Bozeman and am here to support repeal of the medical marijuana law. I am speaking on behalf of myself as well as my partners, Dr. Melissa Augustyn, Dr. Melissa Casper, Dr. Jami Chisdak and Dr. Steve Nickisch.

When this bill was made law by the voters in 2004, I believe it was a very compassionate vote for people to get relief from suffering. And until 2009 that was how it was used. Unfortunately when the Justice Department announced it wouldn't prosecute people who were following state law, the number of users sky-rocketed. We have thousands of people with their "cards" and most of those cards were provided by out of state physicians who come in and hand them out like candy (for a small fee, of course). We have at least 28,000 registered users with 1000 new users every month. Nearly a third of cardholders are under 30 and I wish I had data on how many of those were actually using for cancer or Crohns, but my guess is that it's a very small percentage.

If the voters of this state want to legalize pot then do it but don't try to legitimize it by adding the word medical. There is nothing medical about the way this law is being used. It's a joke and most of the medical profession knows it (I'd love to see a survey of all the physicians in this state and find out how many have actually given a green card to a patient). The vast majority of those with their cards aren't getting them from their usual doctors, but from a rent-a-doc. There is no pharmacy involved. There is no FDA approval or dosing regulation. A non-physician "caregiver", aka their ^{dealer} pot provider, is making medical decisions regarding the amount pot to use and how often. This is not how we access any other medication and if there truly are merits to medical marijuana, then let's treat it like we treat other medications. With randomized controlled trials, with regulations and with respect for the drug it is.

I could give plenty of anecdotes of patients who are using marijuana who don't actually need it for pain, but I'll give you the most egregious example. In our practice we currently have three young women who are pregnant whose caregivers are providing marijuana for nausea and back pain. Now, I'm sorry, but does pregnancy really qualify as a chronic debilitating disease? No. And I don't want some 18 year old "caregiver" telling my patient it's okay to smoke pot when they're pregnant when it's not. Is this what the voters envisioned when they passed the law? A 23 year old woman 7 months pregnant with a joint sticking out of her mouth? I don't think so.

My partners and I strongly support repeal of the medical marijuana law. There is nothing "medical" about it.

8 am
Rm 152

Birth defects not higher \pm occasional use

THC does cross the placenta

Some studies suggest ↑ risk for premature births
& low birth weights

Withdrawal sx if used in 3

↑ tremors, crying, trouble sleeping

may affect brain activity, behavior, sleeping patterns
affects growth & devel of nervous system

~~THC~~ does pass through breast milk

may have trouble
paying attn
but don't appear
to have lower IQs

AAP advise BF mothers avoid marijuana